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Sand Dune Legislation Introduced

Sen. Birkholz announces efforts to protect more sand dunes

LANSING—State Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Twp) introduced legislation Thursday to add additional acres of publicly owned critical sand dunes immediately adjacent to the Great Lakes shoreline to the state's list of critical sand dune areas.

"Preserving our dunes is a critical step in preserving the natural beauty and the unique environment of Michigan," Sen. Birkholz said. "Adding more dunes to our list of critical dunes will assure proper conservation efforts so that subsequent generations will have these dunes to enjoy."

This legislation calls for approximately 4,052 acres of publicly owned critical dunes to be added to the existing 70,000 acres of critical dunes. Many of these acres are located within state or federal parks.

Critical dune areas are those sand dunes specially designated by the Department of Environmental Quality that are particularly sensitive and are protected to avoid development. Critical dune areas represent the highest and most spectacular sand dunes extending along much of Lake Michigan's shoreline and the shores of Lake Superior.

The Legislature's efforts in establishing the critical dune program have been very successful in protecting the most fragile areas of Michigan's dunes through protecting steep, erosive slopes, using alternative construction techniques to reduce the impacts of development on dunes and protecting dune vegetation, which is essential to dune preservation and stability.

"I have been a strong proponent of the critical dune protection program in Michigan, but am also very concerned about any impact on existing private property rights. It is important to note that my plan to add this new acreage involves publicly held dunes where the state and federal government can play an important role in protecting this valuable natural resource" said Birkholz.

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